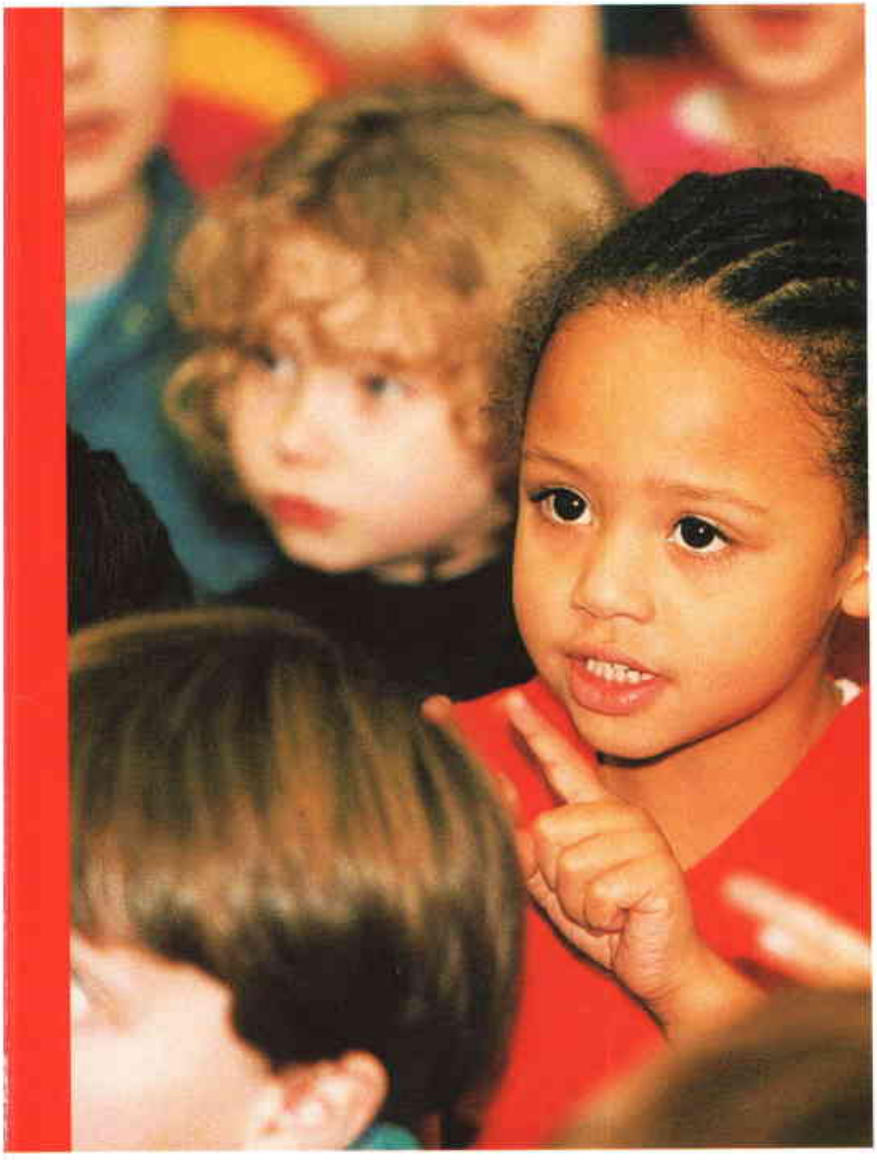
If this were my child...



A councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent

A joint publication from
the Department for Education and Skills
and the Local Government Information Unit

October 2003

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

LGiU

This publication was supported by The Education Network and the Democratic Health Network, partner organisations of the Local Government Information Unit.

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Foreword

by Margaret Hodge Minister for Children, Young People and Families

Many of you will remember receiving the letter from the then Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, in 1998 announcing the launch of Quality Protects, and the vital role you would play in it. When thinking of the services we provide as corporate parents, he suggested we asked ourselves "Is this good enough for my child?". By asking that question, we are most likely to ensure that the most vulnerable children are given the best that society can offer: the care, safety and security and opportunities to make the most of their lives that all children deserve.

One of the greatest successes of the Quality Protects Programme, and a key element in implementing this agenda, has been the enthusiasm with which it has been grasped and driven forward locally by councillors. The concept of corporate parenting – the collective responsibility across services and across councils to safeguard and promote the life chances of looked after children – is widely understood. However, with councillor turnover and changes in the roles of councillors, we all need to ensure this understanding remains current. So we were pleased when the Local Government Information Unit approached us with the idea of this joint publication to help you play an active part in continuing the improvements to children's services seen under the Quality Protects programme.

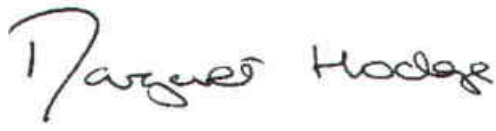
When the Quality Protects programme was launched in 1998 one of the main aims was to improve the well-being and life chances of children looked after by local authorities. The programme has been a key part of our Government's wider strategy for tackling social

exclusion. Our commitment to improving the life chances of looked after children is underlined by a Public Service Agreement target which focuses on

- Improving outcomes for care leavers
- Reducing offending of looked after children
- Improving the educational engagement and attainment of looked after children.

In 2000 the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills issued Joint Guidance to local authorities, underpinned by a Department of Health Circular, *The Education of Children and Young People in Public Care*. This guidance was specifically to 'assist local authorities in their role as corporate parents' to safeguard and promote the education of children in their care. To support the guidance an Education Protects programme was launched to assist local authorities improve educational support and outcomes. This work continues apace, with the Social Exclusion Unit's report *A Better Education for Children in Care*; Choice Protects aiming to improve placement quality and choice for children; and the implementation of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

In September 2003 the Government published a Green Paper *Every Child Matters* setting out our vision for every child to be healthy, safe, grow up enjoying and achieving, and making a positive contribution to society, and to grow up in good economic circumstances. The Government is committed to improving the life chances for vulnerable children. My appointment as the first Minister for Children, Young People and Families is testament to that. I hope you will use this booklet to help you play your part.



MARGARET HODGE MBE
Minister for Children,Young People and Families

"Elected councillors have a crucial role. Only you can carry it out. You can make sure that the interests of the children come first. You bring a fresh look and common sense. As councillors you set the strategic direction of your council's services and determine policy and priorities for your local community within the overall objectives set by Government. It is the responsibility of your officers to manage services and resources in order to achieve those policy objectives and to advise your council on the best way forward. Councillors and officers need to have a good dialogue to ensure that councillors clearly understand their role and responsibilities, and that officers understand the expectations of your council."

Extract from Frank Dobson's letter to all councillors, September 1998

1. Introduction

1.1. If this were my child,...

When you became a councillor, you also became responsible for ensuring that the council acts as the "corporate parent" for all the children in its care. The role of corporate parent is to seek for the children in public care the outcomes that every good parent would want for their own children.

A common misconception about children in care is that they are there because they have done something wrong. This is untrue. The overwhelming majority of children in care are there because of family pressures and problems or because they have experienced abuse or neglect.

Once a child is in care, all members and officers of the council, as their corporate parents, need to be concerned about that child as if they were their own. This concern should encompass their education, their health and welfare, what they do in their leisure time and holidays, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements.

Glossary of terms

There are many terms that you may come across which professionals use to describe children in need under the Children Act 1989. Below are simple definitions of the most common:

looked after children – these are children who are looked after by the local authority through a care order made by a court or by agreement with their parent(s), whether in a residential home, with other members of their extended family or with foster carers. These are the children for whom the council is the corporate parent and are the children about whom this publication is primarily concerned.

children in need – these comprise a much wider group of children who are assessed as being unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without access to services. The Children Act says all disabled children are children in need, as are those whose names are on the child protection register (see below).

children at risk of harm – these are children about whom there are concerns that they are or may be at risk of suffering harm through abuse or neglect. Your council will maintain a child protection register of the names of children who are the subject of a child protection plan because of continuing concerns about their safety. It will monitor closely their safety and developmental progress.

1.2. Ensuring a joined-up approach

The corporate parenting responsibility is towards children looked after by your council, and therefore applies to members of local councils with social services responsibilities – unitary and metropolitan authorities, London boroughs and county councils. However, it is important to bear in mind that it is not just social services that impact on these children. Section 27 of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on health, housing and education authorities to assist social services authorities in carrying out their functions under the Act – this includes assisting in their corporate parenting function.

Members should seek to ensure that provision of other public services used or needed by looked after children and young people is high quality, "joined-up" and takes account of their needs. The Green Paper proposes the model of a Children's Trust which can include:

- the local health service
- Sure Start and Children's Fund programmes
- early years provision
- the Connexions employment and training service
- the Learning and Skills Council
- the Local Education Authority and schools
- Further and higher education providers and training providers
- Youth Offending Teams (Yots)
- the council housing department, housing associations or management companies who may run some or all local social housing

- the council's leisure and library services
- other services that may be contracted out to private or voluntary sector organisations

For members in county councils you need to engage with the district councils in your county to make them aware of the needs of your looked after children in relation to the services that they provide. Ensuring the voices of the children and young people themselves are heard by other authorities, services and agencies is vital.

To provide guidance on the sorts of issues you should be aware of in all the different roles you have as a councillor, this publication contains a series of different questions for you to think about. Do not worry if you do not know all the answers immediately or cannot remember them! The important thing is that you know how you can find out the answers, and that your authority has developed a means of informing you and updating that information.

2. Being a good corporate parent

2.1. Who is a corporate parent and what do they do?

The council as a whole is the "corporate parent", therefore all councillors have a basic level of responsibility for the children in their authority's care. This requires there to be mechanisms for all councillors to receive accurate information and be able to find out about the basic issues faced by such children in their area.

This section outlines the policy areas of which all councillors need to be aware. The following sections on scrutiny and the executive suggest some of the additional specific responsibilities and issues involved for members taking on these functions. The issues in this publication are equally relevant to England and Wales. There are some small differences in the guidance and approach taken; sources for this and other information are mentioned in the **Resource File** at the end of this document.

2.2. Checklist

1. Do you receive regular information on and know the answers to the key questions about children in your area (see box below)?
2. Does your authority provide training and information for you as corporate parents, about the issues for and concerns of children in your area?
3. Does your authority provide specific training for any councillors who may come into contact with looked after children, for example by visiting children's homes?
4. How do you know what issues concern the young people in your council's care? What arrangements are there to enable you to enter into a dialogue with children for whom you are corporately responsible and for you to respond to their views?
5. Is there an occasion at least once a year for the council to hear from looked after children and young people and foster carers and to celebrate their achievements?

2.3. Key questions for councillors

Key questions for councillors

1. How many children in need, children whose names are on the child protection register, looked after children and care-leavers are there in your area? How old are they and what sort of help do they need?
2. In particular how many are from ethnic minorities and how many are disabled?
3. Are your looked after children safe?
4. How well does the authority look after them?
5. Are they all in school or is there alternative educational provision? How well are they doing at school, college or university and what needs to be done to improve educational outcomes?
6. What are their health needs?
7. What are their housing needs?
8. What specific support is there when they leave your care?
9. What is happening to make sure they don't get into trouble?

Good Practice in Dudley and Gateshead – Informing councillors

Dudley and Gateshead, among other councils, are issuing all councillors and officers with a Corporate Parenting Pack, containing the strategy for looked after children and joint policy statements from Social Services & Health and Social Services & Education.

Key question 1. How many children in need, children whose names are on the child protection register, looked after children and care-leavers are there in your area?

Key question 2. In particular how many are from ethnic minorities and how many are disabled?

- How many children are there in each of these categories?
- What is their ethnic and cultural background?
- Do they have any disabilities or other special needs?
- Are they involved in any offending behaviour?
- What trends are there in any of these figures?
- What arrangements are there for members of the council to listen to and act on the views of young people?

Of particular concern should be the ethnic and cultural make-up of these groups of children. For example, if there is an imbalance between the proportion of children of a particular ethnic group in care and their proportion in the local population overall, councillors will need to ask questions to try to understand the reasons for this.

Councillors will also want to ask questions about disabled children who are over represented amongst children in care. They are more likely to be looked after in residential settings, sometimes with poor links with their families. All children in residential schools, paid for by social services should be supported as looked after children, although research shows this is not always the case. Disabled children are vulnerable if not protected by regular contact with a social worker and when regular reviews of their needs are not carried out.

It is important to be aware of children placed in residential schools, especially those who end up living a long way from their home area or home council. Often these placements are paid for jointly by social services and education , and the children should receive the same support as those living within the borough. They should be seen as looked after in the same way as other children in care, for example, do they have a social worker who keeps in contact and regularly review their needs? Children in such situations can be particularly vulnerable. Even though they are placed in another borough, councillors in the home

authority do not loose their parental responsibility for these children and councillors must ensure that such children are properly cared for. Another growing group of vulnerable children, who come within the scope of the Children Act and are likely to be looked after children, are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Members should be aware of the particular needs and isolation of any such children in their area.

In addition, you need to be satisfied that your council is meeting the cultural and religious needs of looked after children. Many authorities send Christmas cards and presents to their looked after children; other religious festivals should also be marked and celebrated in some appropriate way.

Key question 3. Are your looked after children safe?

Councillors have a responsibility to ensure that arrangements are in place to promote the welfare of children in the care of the local authority, and to protect them from abuse and neglect. Where there are concerns about the welfare or safety of a child who is accommodated or the subject of a Care Order, the guidance in the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children* must be followed, as for any other child.

You will need to consider how well you ensure that children in the care of the local authority are protected from abuse – emotional, physical and sexual – and from neglect. To this end, you will wish to ensure that your council has implemented the guidance in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* and the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*. Indeed, you should receive regular reports on the use of this guidance including how many staff have received training (including induction and continuing staff development) on it. You should also receive regular reports including statistics on the number of looked after children whose names are on the Child Protection Register.

Good Practice Example: Gateshead

Gateshead Council introduced the training pack, *Towards Safer Care* to a wide-ranging multi-agency audience, via its Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) training sub-group. This, together with a Corporate Action Plan, helped to increase the awareness of key staff of the risks to children from potential abusers.

- Do staff receive training on *Working Together to Safeguard Children* and the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families?*
- If looked after children experience concerns about their own safety, do they have someone trusted to talk to?
- Do foster carers and staff responsible for looked after children know what to do if they have concerns about a child's safety?

- Do staff and foster parents have regular training on what to do if they have concerns about a child's safety?
- How many looked after children's names are on the child protection register? What are the reasons for looked after children's names being on the register?
- Are all the necessary recruitment checks carried out?
- Are effective management systems and procedures in place to support front line staff working with looked after children?
- Are there appropriate procedures in place for use when a child goes missing from care (including foster care)? Have the measures in *Children Missing from Care and from Home* been implemented for children in care?
- Does the Local Authority work effectively, through the Area Child Protection Committee (proposed in the 2003 Green Paper to be replaced by a statutory Local Safeguarding Children Board), with the other local agencies responsible for the provision of services to looked after children?
- Are the specific needs of disabled children addressed in child protection protocols?

Key question 4. How well does your local authority look after them?

- What services are available for children in your area and looked after children in particular, and how much do you spend on providing them? Do looked after children have access to the full range of services available to all children?

This could range from advocacy and advice services, for example on sex education or drugs abuse, to provision of information about services that children and young people can access, to youth work and leisure activities providing safe opportunities for play and exercise.

- What needs are you unable to meet and why are you unable to meet them?

Good practice in Nottingham – children's advocacy

Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City provide independent advocacy services for children through a partnership with National Children's Homes.

- For children looked after by your council, what type of placement are they in – foster care, residential home, custody – and how many placement moves have children had?
- Are they in the right placement in the first place?
- How many children in your care are living in placements outside your authority, where you will have less opportunity to influence whether or not they do well?

- Do all looked after children have an allocated social worker and are all case files kept up to date and reviewed regularly?

One of the greatest problems for children in care is the upheaval caused by frequent moves from one type of placement to another, between foster carers and even from one area to another. Each placement move may require the child – already traumatised by the events at home that have led them into care – to change schools, make new friends or develop new relationships with a different set of adults and professionals.

While some placement moves, particularly for children placed in emergency care are essential, the Government wants local authorities to ensure that looked after children do not have more than three placement moves in any one year. This does not mean that if a placement turns out to be inappropriate for the child, for whatever reason, they should not remain in that placement simply in order to meet a target. However, too many placements can end because appropriate education is not in place, or if the school placement breaks down putting pressure on the carers. More needs to be done to prevent placement breakdown and Councillors need to know that in their authority children are not having multiple and disruptive placement moves.

Good practice in Dudley, Warrington and Thurrock – ways of increasing stability in children's lives

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has the lowest percentage of children with three or more placements in its comparator group of similar authorities and very low numbers of children placed out of the borough – reducing this from 29 to 15 in two years between 1997 and 1999. One of the ways they have achieved this is through good support to foster carers, including levels of remuneration, mentoring and involving them in service planning. (Dudley Joint Review 2002)

Warrington also has fewer placement changes than the national average and the second highest rate of family placements in their comparator group. While their levels of remuneration for foster carers are not high, they provide good support and training, with ten foster carers studying to gain NVQs. (Warrington Joint Review 2001)

Although Thurrock was assessed as lacking sufficient numbers of high quality foster carers, they have set up a specific scheme, the Phoenix Scheme, to cut out-of-borough placements, which has succeeded in doing so by 25%. (Thurrock Joint Review 2002)

Key question 5. How well are they doing at school, college or university?

- Do they have a school place, attend school regularly and how many are excluded, officially or unofficially, from school?

- Are those out of school provided with appropriate and full-time alternative learning provision?
- What progress are they making and how do they do in examinations and Standard Assessment Tests?
- Does every child have a personal education plan (PEP) and is it up-to-date?
- Do they receive the support they need to benefit from education?
- How many have a statement of special educational need and how does this compare with average rates of statementing in the area?
- How many looked after children achieve at or above what they were predicted to achieve when they entered public care (the value-added approach – see below) and what aspirations do your schools have for them?
- How does your council encourage and support young people to continue in further and higher education?
- Do you know what they want to be when they grow up?

Too many children in care are unable to achieve their educational potential. Even allowing for the effect of trauma on children before they came into care, being in care has a major adverse effect on children's educational attainment. The objectives set out in the Quality Protects programme; the issuing of joint Government guidance and the practical support offered to local authorities through the Education Protects programme has helped to focus attention on educational life chances and the vital need for corporate parenting support in improving outcomes. However, even allowing for the effect of trauma on children before they came into care, the Social Exclusion Unit Report confirms that the major barriers to achievement continue to be:

- Lack of stability;
- Time out of school;
- Insufficient help with education, particularly catching up;
- Lack of proactive support and encouragement from carers; and,
- Insufficient help with their emotional, mental and physical health.

Any good parent will want their child to do well at school and to get the best start in life. As corporate parents, it is councillors' responsibility to have the highest aspirations for children in the council's care. Ensuring close co-operation between Education and Social Services departments is crucial in this area of work.

Good practice in Nottinghamshire – raising educational attainment of looked after children

Nottinghamshire County Council has recruited a former head teacher to act as a "Virtual Head" for the educational attainment of looked after children across the county, cutting suspensions and exclusions of looked after children. Nottinghamshire has the highest percentage of looked after children leaving care with qualifications (almost 60%) in its comparator group. (Nottinghamshire Joint Review 2002)

You should monitor your council's progress against the Government's national target of substantially narrowing the gap between the educational attainment and participation of children in care and that of their peers by 2006.

This target will have been achieved if, by 2006:

- outcomes for 11 year olds in English and maths are at least 60% as good as those of their peers;
- the proportion who become disengaged from education is reduced, so that no more than 10% reach school leaving age without having sat a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) equivalent exam; and
- the proportion of those aged 16 who get qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs graded A*-C has risen on average by 4 percentage points each year since 2002; and in all authorities at least 15% of young people in care achieve this level of qualifications.

Statutory guidance on Education Development Plans requires local education authorities to identify strategies for raising attainment for children in public care and to set a local target for care leavers at Key Stage 4 (GCSE). *A Better Education for Children in Care* highlights the importance of using the Personal Education Plan as a planning tool.

Good practice in South Gloucestershire – raising educational attainment of looked after children

Following a poor set of performance indicators in 2000/01, South Gloucestershire has implemented a new system of monitoring pupils' performance using a value-added approach. It requires close working between education and social services and monitoring throughout the year to track the progress made by children in public care.

Where the children achieve beyond initial expectations, they receive a letter of congratulation from the Executive Member for Education or the Director. Where their attainment is less than expected, this is investigated by a multi-agency panel and recommendations made for ways forward in the next year. (DfES/DoH 2002)

Councillors who are school governors can play a key role in pushing schools to have high expectations of and raise attainment standards for looked after children. Looked after children have said that they want schools and authorities to believe in them and to have the same aspirations for what they can achieve as for other children. This is a key responsibility for members as corporate parents.

At governing body monitoring meetings you should ask what strategies are in place for assisting looked after children in the school to do better. It may be particularly appropriate for councillor-governors to be the link governor for this issue, given your dual responsibilities as both governor and corporate parent.

Local authorities should expect LEA appointed governors to act as champions promoting the needs of children in care in schools and nurseries.

Key question 6. What are their health needs?

One of the issues children in care feel most keenly about, is not having someone to talk to in confidence about their health needs and concerns, particularly information about growing up. They also feel that the traditional annual health check required for all looked after children can be impersonal and degrading. Guidance issued in November 2002 makes changes to reflect this and gives councils new responsibilities to promote the health – both mental and physical health – of looked after children.

Independent advocacy and advice services which looked after children can access are important, as is ensuring that your authority has reviewed how it assesses the health of looked after children in a sensitive way. At a more strategic level, it is important that your authority works in a joined up way with local health services to ensure the health needs of looked after children are on the agenda.

Good Practice: The National Healthy Care Standard has been introduced in 6 pilot sites to co-ordinate multi-agency support for looked after children's health. This is delivered via a multi-agency looked after partnership (MALAP) which co-ordinates the implementation of actions and policies to improve the health of looked after children.

- How is your authority implementing the 'Promoting the Health of Looked After Children' guidance?
- How is your authority responding to proposals in the Green Paper to establish a Children's Trust as a model for the integration of commissioning and provision of services?
- See Section 4.4 below for how to use local authorities' power of health scrutiny to monitor the health service on this issue.

Good practice in Nottinghamshire – joint working with Health

Nottinghamshire have used part of their Quality Protects allocation to develop a cross-agency Corporate Parenting Agreement and recruit staff from the health and education services to deliver more joint working. (Nottinghamshire Joint Review 2002)

Key question 7. What are their housing needs?

- Is there enough affordable housing for foster carers, and/or are levels of remuneration adequate for the cost of living locally?
- What support is there for care-leavers in finding and living in their own accommodation, if necessary?
- Is there a sufficient range of supported accommodation options for care leavers?
- Are the particular needs of disabled young people leaving residential placements being met?
- If you are a member in a County Council, what links are there with District Councils over housing provision?
- If you are a member in a District Council, what arrangements are in place to ensure your corporate parenting responsibilities are recognised?

Good practice in Bolton – joint working with Housing

Bolton's Joint Review found genuine commitment to collaborative joint working with Housing, illustrated by a number of initiatives such as strong preparation for young people leaving care and responding to the needs of homeless young people. (Bolton Joint Review 2002)

Key question 8. What support is there when they leave your care?

- How many young people who left care at 16 are still in touch with their social worker, carer or other approved person at the age of 19?
- What sort of progress, for example in education, training, and employment, do young people make after they leave your authority's care?
- How does this compare with other young people in the area?
- How have the provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 been implemented in your area?

- If not, why not and what is being done to ensure the Act is fully implemented?
- How will they secure employment?
- How many care leavers does your council employ?

Care-leavers are over-represented in both the prison and homeless populations, indicating that spending time in care does not help prepare them for independent living when they leave. As a major local employer, the council could offer major employment and training opportunities to care-leavers, and councillors as corporate parents have a key responsibility in ensuring the council does so.

You should monitor your council's progress against the Government's national target for improving the level of participation in education, training and employment of care leavers aged 19. The target will be achieved if the levels for this group are at least 75% of those achieved by all young people in your area.

Good practice in Thurrock – supporting care-leavers

Thurrock has a Corporate Parenting Panel, which meets monthly to monitor the experiences of looked after children and was instrumental in setting up work placements in the council for care-leavers, from which some have gone on to modern apprenticeships with the council.

Key question 9. What is happening to make sure they don't get into trouble?

- How many young people in care in your authority have been in trouble with the police? How does this compare with all young people? You should monitor your council's progress against the Government's national target for narrowing the gap in offending between children in care and their peers. The target will be achieved if the rate of children in care is reduced to 7.2%. In September 2000 the rate was 10.8% which is three times the rate for all children.
- What support is available to carers concerned about a young person's behaviour?
- Are there good relationships between children's homes and the police locally?
- What activities are available so that children and young people do not get into trouble, eg access to leisure services?

The proportion of young people in care who receive a final warning or conviction is three times as high nationally than all young people.

2.4. Communications and information

To find out the answers to the key questions identified above, you need some basic information, which can be provided in a variety of ways – written or face-to-face briefings, an annual report, or opportunities to meet and hear directly from looked after children themselves.

Good practice in Oxfordshire and Gateshead – communications between children and councillors

In Oxfordshire a letter was sent to members of the Children and Young Person's Sub-Committee from "an Oxfordshire child", setting out councillors' responsibilities to all children in the county. Oxfordshire also has a Children's Rights Checklist, drawn up by children from two schools and widely circulated (used at LGIU Corporate Parenting seminar June 2002)

In Gateshead, there is a Children's Rights Officer with a wide ranging remit, including responsibility for organising the Youth Parliament, which plays a key role in linking looked after children and councillors (Safeguarding Children 2002)

Communications between children, their carers, the council and councillors are complicated. There are issues of confidentiality and respect, and the needs and interests of the child must always come first. Personal contact between councillors and looked after children on an individual basis is not generally appropriate, although they have the same rights as any local resident to visit their ward councillor, for example.

On the other hand, some contact and communication is important, both for councillors and the children and young people themselves. For councillors it can help them understand why they must take their responsibilities seriously. For the young people, it is an opportunity to express their views and concerns directly to those with ultimate policy-making authority.

Good practice in Wales – listening to children

In recent years in Wales, particular emphasis has been given by both the Assembly and Local Government to the participation of children and young people. Notable developments have been the establishment of:

- a Children's Commissioner for Wales who can act as an independent scrutineer of and advisor on policies and service delivery affecting children, undertake investigations into individual cases where the issues at stake have wider implications, and champion children's interests and rights;
- Funky Dragon, the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales, which is a representative self-governing body of national and local level forums and networks of children and young people across Wales. Its website provides a platform for children and young people to raise and discuss issues of concern. Representatives meet twice yearly with Assembly Ministers to progress these issues which are publicised for wider discussion, via the Dragon's Dialogue report.
- Youth Forums in place or developing in every local authority area, designed to facilitate the direct input of children and young people in the local authority's Children and Young People's Partnership;
- School councils in all primary and secondary schools to build pupil confidence, encourage active citizenship and provide the opportunity for participation in decisions affecting the school.

Councillors should be aware of issues of concern to children. Children have raised a range of issues in the Quality Protects programme and the Choice Protects review, through the Children's Rights Director and through A National Voice campaigns. These can include simple requests about how they are treated, for example that when moving placement, they are given suitcases rather than having to move their belongings in black bin bags.

Children ask for information about new placements before they move, and about the services available to them. They ask to be able to meet other children in care through groups, and to be able to keep in touch with extended family, old friends and old placements when they move. They also want to be listened to and to have a chance to express their opinions about being in care.

Good practice in LB Newham – listening to children

Newham's Corporate Parenting Group is chaired by the Chief Executive and involves key councillors, directorate representatives and two young people's representatives. It has its own budget and is taking practical steps on issues identified by young people, e.g. 100% of care-leavers are offered council accommodation. A young person said of this group:

"They actually listen to us and ask our views, and they act on your views, which is the crucial point."

(SSI/Audit Commission 2002)

Local authorities need to consider ways in which councillors and the children in their council's care can communicate with each other sensitively and appropriately. Ideas you could try include:

- An annual debate at full council, with presentations from groups of looked after children, foster carers and care-leavers on their experiences during the year
- An annual awards ceremony to celebrate looked after children's achievements at school during the year
- Training delivered by young people for councillors on what is important to them and how to communicate
- A newsletter from children and young people in the council's care for councillors and other individuals and agencies
- Meetings between lead members and young people and carers about issues chosen by the children and young people themselves, to their agenda
- Inviting young people's representatives to sit on relevant committees or working groups (e.g. Children's Trust)
- Work with a voluntary sector partner, to provide an independent advocate and intermediary between children and the council.

3. Being a good Executive corporate parent

3.1. Responsibilities of executive members

The new political management structures place increasing responsibility on executive members to play a corporate leadership role as an individual, rather than as a leading member of a service committee. In taking this role forward there are four major themes to consider:

- the increasing importance of political leadership
- the increasing emphasis on partnership and joined-up working
- opportunities offered by the new structures to work in a more cross-cutting way, now formalised in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* proposals for a lead member for Children
- issues around funding, setting priorities and commissioning.

3.2. Checklist

1. Have you ensured that there is clear political leadership and responsibility for children by an identified lead member?
2. How does the lead member work with other lead members to bring in issues from other directorates and agencies?
3. Is corporate parenting considered collectively at executive meetings, or does it tend to be left to one lead member?
4. What contribution to partnership working is made by executive members?
5. What are the funding levels allocated to services for children corporately, but particularly in children's social services?
6. What approach have you taken towards commissioning appropriate levels and types of services?
7. How do you take a lead in ensuring other members are aware of their responsibilities for corporate parenting?

3.3. Providing leadership

Councillors who are members of their council's executive or cabinet have a particular responsibility to provide leadership for the local community. The importance of political leadership has been increasingly emphasised in recent analyses of performance across all areas of local public service, such as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and the Welsh Programme for Improvement.

In his Annual Report 2001/02, for example, the Chief Inspector for the Social Services Inspectorate Wales (SSIW) made no apology for repeating the previous year's theme: "the need for strong and effective leadership at political, corporate and professional level".

From the Annual Report 2001/02 of Joint Reviews in England, some key attributes of councils with strong leadership include:

- clear strategic direction
- clear roles and responsibilities between councillors and officers
- decision-making on the basis of good information
- ambition to raise the standards of core services

- using resources to good effect
- openness to challenge and willingness to change direction.

The importance of effective political leadership

The impact of effective political leadership is also evidenced in individual Joint Reviews:

"The roles of members is critical to the effective business management of the Social Services Department and in Bolton, members are informed, supportive, challenging and inclusive." (Bolton)

"Strong and informed political commitment to Children's Services has contributed positively to their successful development." (Milton Keynes)

"Knowledgeable social services councillors ... have contributed to steady progress in most areas of performance in social services." (Warrington)

3.4. Planning and commissioning

The Choice Protects review is looking to help local authorities improve the way that placements for looked after children are planned and commissioned. The Choice Protects national partnership in placement forum has been established, involving leading commissioners and providers, and will produce a strategic agreement describing how placement services for looked after children should be planned and commissioned. Lead executive members need to be aware of these developments and to ensure that your authority is able to respond.

Local authorities need to commission a range of placements in order to offer looked after children the best possible match. Strategic commissioning plans should be based on an assessment of current need and should also anticipate what placements are likely to be needed in the future. The strategic commissioning plan should guide the planning and development of local authorities' in-house services and also help local authorities to commission the right placements from external providers. Commissioning placements in this way should help local authorities enter into joint commissioning and consortia arrangements, reduce unnecessary out of authority placements, and make the best use of residential care.

Effective commissioning involves market developmen. This requires commissioners to work in closer partnership with service providers. It is essential that commissioning strategies are based on accurate assessments of population need and that commissioners, once services have been commissioned, take reasonable steps to make sure that placements meet the needs of individual looked after children. Quality assurance needs to

have a central role within children's placement services, and lead members have a responsibility to drive up service standards in this area.

3.5. Partnership working

All public services are increasingly being delivered through partnerships of different kinds, whether with other public sector bodies, or the private or voluntary sector. One of the developing roles for executive councillors is to play a leading role on these partnerships on behalf of their authority, rather than leaving this to chief officers as was traditionally the case.

The Government's Pathfinder Children's Trusts offer further opportunities for leading members to play a key part in driving up standards across service boundaries, focusing on outcomes for children. In addition to partnership bodies specifically relating to children, for example in Health and Social Care, it is important for leading members to raise issues of concern to children in the other forums in which they are likely to be active.

Good practice in Bolton and Thurrock – councillors' roles in partnership working

In Bolton, members' role and the corporate framework for partnership working were identified as key strengths in their Joint Review. Policy Development Groups drive this work, chaired by executive members and including stakeholders from other directorates and outside agencies. (Bolton Joint Review January 2002)

In Thurrock, according to their Joint Review, the "approach to partnership was also demonstrated at a political level: councillors saw their roles on health bodies or regeneration boards as equally important to their role in relation to council services." (Thurrock Joint Review July 2002)

There is a need, however, to challenge the setting up of ever increasing numbers of partnership boards, cross-agency working parties, multi-agency steering groups etc, not least to avoid overload on the participants. There is also a danger that the creation of new delivery mechanisms can create new barriers and obstacles to joined-up working rather than break down old ones.

In Nottinghamshire, for example, the Joint Review found seventeen cross-agency boards and partnerships interacting in a complex web of children's services provision – as well as the seven Local Strategic Partnerships, seven Primary Care Trusts and six Sure Start Programme Boards – and concluded:

> "Because of the sheer number of organisations and the accumulating volume of partnership initiatives, all agencies are now experiencing logistical problems in

fielding managers of the appropriate authority for the time-consuming plethora of meetings." (Nottinghamshire Joint Review December 2002)

Sometimes it may be more a matter of ensuring effective "joining-up" of existing services and ways of working, rather than setting up new partnership structures. Children's Trusts provide a model which can simplify the complexities that have arisen as a response to joint working initiatives. A key role for members is required at Trust board level, working with other partner agencies in a comprehensive approach to the Commissioning of Services.

Good Practice in Hertfordshire – joining up services to raise educational attainment

The Education Support Service for children in care and care leavers in Hertfordshire actively supports children of statutory school age both in and outside of school time to help them raise their all round attainment. Young people beyond statutory school age are comprehensively supported in a way that widens their participation in further or higher education, training and employment.

The service is staffed by officers from a range of agencies: four Advisory teachers, one Educational Psychologist, eight Education Support Workers, four Connexions Personal Advisers, a Teenagers 2 Work and an Out of School Hours Learning Co-ordinator for children in care together with the Manager for Education, Training and Employment for care leavers and the Corporate Parenting Officer who lead the policy initiatives.

The service offers direct support to young people as agreed in the Personal Education Plan or Pathway planning process as well as a comprehensive programme of out of school hours and study support opportunities specifically aimed at overcoming the barriers to learning faced by children in care. These supported learning opportunities are offered during school holidays, after school and at weekends and are representative of the "joined-up" services within Children, Schools and Families and its partner agencies.

3.6. Cross-cutting portfolios

The new political structures offer good opportunities for members to contribute to better joined-up working through the use of themed or cross-cutting portfolios. A number of authorities, including Bolton, Oxfordshire and LB Hackney, have already created a post for Children and Young People in their executive, covering a range of services including Education, the Youth Service and Children & Families social services, and foreshadowing the recent Green Paper proposals (see relevant paragraphs on the Green Paper in Resource File 1 below). Such postholders have a brief to make links with other lead members to ensure children's issues are taken into account in their areas of responsibility.

3.7. Funding and political priorities

Ensuring a political priority for children across the council is a key task for the leading member responsible. When funding is required to be attached to this, difficult decisions can follow, but making a case to colleagues for necessary extra funding is one of the roles of executive members. It is, however, also true that funding levels do not appear to be necessarily correlated to service outcomes, as a comparison between Joint Review assessments and authorities' levels of spending above or below SSA shows.

Good Practice in LB Hackney – political priorities and leadership to drive service improvements

In 1999, the London Borough of Hackney received one of the worst SSI inspection reports ever issued for its Children & Families Service. At the time it was a hung council and had had no fixed Chair of Social Services for some years, with members rotating the chair for each committee meeting. Following the inspection, a commitment was made to appoint a permanent chair and a new Director and Assistant Director to provide political and managerial leadership.

At the same time, Hackney entered a major financial crisis, with millions of pounds of savings having to be made across the council year on year. However, the Chair of Social Services made a political case for major investment in the fostering service. Despite the need for savings overall, members took the decision to invest to save in Children and Families, resulting in more foster carers being recruited locally and less use of expensive out-of-borough placements.

In 2003, a Joint Review assessed Hackney's social services overall as serving most people well, with promising prospects for improvement, with particular strengths in Children and Families, concluding that "services have been transformed since 1999" and that "a determined focus on priorities has helped deliver substantial improvements". (London Borough of Hackney Joint Review 2003).

4. Being a good Scrutiny corporate parent

4.1. Asking the questions

The scrutiny function offers councillors a range of different and potentially exciting and innovative ways to fulfil their corporate parenting responsibilities. In some respects, councillors fulfilling their scrutiny function are closest to the vision set out in the original Secretary of State's letter on corporate parenting, where he described councillors as the people in the system who have a responsibility to "bring a fresh look and common sense" and "ask demanding questions about the services and resources for children in your community". (Dobson, 1998)

It is fair to say that many of these opportunities have not yet been realised, as scrutiny remains at an early stage of development in most authorities. The difficult issue is how to structure the implementation of your scrutiny role to make sure that you as councillors are picking up on all the important pieces of information relating to children looked after by the authority. The Annual Report of Joint Reviews in England by the SSI and Audit Commission in 2001/02 highlighted the dilemma:

> "In many councils, there is an urgent need to engage Scrutiny Committees in a more meaningful way, so that they are not simply noting large numbers of reports, but playing an active role in investigating the most important issues in depth. Equally, scrutineers need to become skilled in monitoring the implementation of policies –

and the impact for service users and potential users – so that any criticism of policy changes is well informed." (SSI / Audit Commission 2002)

Good Practice Example – Trent Strategic Health Authority (SHA)

Trent SHA have introduced a Looked After Health Standards document for Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to consider during the production of their Local Delivery Plans. Standards that PCTs are expected to meet for looked after children include:

1. Ensure structures in place to plan, manage and monitor delivery of health care for all looked after children.
2. In collaboration with social services, identify appropriate designated doctors and nurses to provide strategic and clinical leadership to defined geographical population; and ensure they are appropriately trained.
3. Ensure clinical governance and audit arrangements in place to assure quality of health assessments and health care planning.
4. Ensure that where a child is placed "out of authority"; systems are in place to provide continuity of the health assessment and planning process.
5. Ensure systems are in place to make sure looked after children are registered with GPs and dentists near to where they are living – even if this is a temporary placements. PCTs must encourage GP practices to accept this standard and allow looked after children to be registered.
6. When looked after children need to register with new GP, ensure systems in place to "fast track" GP-held clinical records and dental records. Ensure systems in place through commissioning process to make sure looked after children are not disadvantaged when they move from one PCT area to another – i.e. NHS waiting lists.
7. Ensure arrangements in place for transition from child to adult health services.
8. Ensure appropriate data set collected and reviewed annually.

The introduction of Children's Trusts offers an opportunity for the council to use their scrutiny role effectively. Now that local authorities have the responsibility to scrutinise their own services and the health services in their area, they have the opportunity to review the major activity of Children's Trusts in a whole systems way. Several of the Trusts also envisage further roles for councillors. In Newcastle, for example, a Children's Champion will be appointed. This will potentially be an elected member whose function will be to 'walk

the service', scrutinise services and promote the interests of children – including all aspects of the Children's Trust.

The checklist suggests some potential avenues to explore, in particular using the new power of health scrutiny to examine how your local health service is responding to the health needs of looked after children, and seeking to consult and involve the children and young people themselves in reviewing and improving the services that they use.

4.2. Checklist

1. What kind of scrutiny structure and process does your authority need to help fulfil your corporate parenting responsibilities? Does your present structure help you do this?
2. Have all members in your authority had the opportunity to gain answers to the key questions for councillors in the previous section and checklist? If not, who is responsible for this and can you call them to account?
3. What are the key issues that are of most concern to looked after children in your authority? If you are not sure, have you considered commissioning a survey or inviting a group of looked after children to a scrutiny meeting?
4. Have you had a recent external inspection, with an action plan which the executive should be implementing and which you could monitor?
5. Using your health scrutiny powers (see below), have you considered monitoring how the health needs of looked after children are being met?
6. How do you monitor the educational achievements of the children who are in your care?
7. How would you know if young people in your care were getting into trouble with the police?
8. Are you aware of provision for looked after children, particularly care leavers, by the local housing service? If you are a county councillor, have you considered a joint scrutiny exercise with your district council colleagues of housing provision for care-leavers or foster carers, for example?

4.3. What is the best scrutiny structure to use?

There are a number of different ways of developing scrutiny effectively in relation to meeting corporate parenting responsibilities, some of which different authorities have already adopted and which your council could consider:

- On-going service monitoring and scrutiny

You may feel that you need to monitor services for looked after children on a continuous, on-going basis. You ght want a scrutiny committee to receive regular reports on the local statistics relating to looked after children or on progress with implementing the Action Plan which local authorities must produce following a Joint Review.

Good Practice in Leicester – terms of reference for a Scrutiny Committee

Leicester City Council has agreed the following responsibilities for Scrutiny Committee Members (April 2003):

To take all necessary steps to scrutinise the Council's arrangements for safeguarding children, with particular reference to:

- the adequacy of funding
- staff levels and morale
- the Department's performance, including unallocated cases
- the care, education, health and achievements of Looked After Children
- that protection is accessible to all communities

- A one-off, in-depth, top-to-bottom policy review

  This could be of the whole experience of looked after children, perhaps along Best Value lines, or of a particular aspect – this could be combined with the above system if on-going monitoring reveals a major problem that warrants further investigation.

Good practice in LB Camden – one-off scrutiny review

The London Borough of Camden held a scrutiny inquiry into Children Looked After by Camden in 2000, which resulted in detailed recommendations for improvements. Their inquiry heard evidence from outside experts and council officers, commissioned a questionnaire to Camden looked after children and care leavers, and the members visited a children's home and observed family case conferences.

More from: www.camden.gov.uk/yourcouncil/scrutiny_fr.htm

There are two key difficulties that need to be considered and overcome if you wish to ensure you are making the best use of scrutiny to support your corporate parenting duties and to avoid simply re-creating the old social services committee:

- How do you prevent monitoring becoming purely reactive and passive?

  Members should always challenge why they are being provided with information and ask themselves and their officers what the information is telling them. There is a need to prioritise and to set the key indicators and targets for your priorities, and monitor these on the most regular basis; issues of lesser concern can be reported on less frequently, for example through a six-monthly or even annual review.

  The key way of actively determining which issues are priorities to monitor, is to seek feedback from the young people themselves, from foster carers and other relevant agencies and use this to drive your scrutiny work in this area.

Good practice in Nottinghamshire – involving service users and carers in scrutiny

Nottinghamshire County Council have developed systematic means of involving service users and carers in service monitoring, drawing all feedback from a multiplicity of forums and user groups together into an annual report and action points, the implementation of which is monitored by both members and officers.

Nottinghamshire's Joint Review in December 2002 identified this as a strength and suggested it could be developed to provide more opportunities for elected members to engage directly with users and carers in order better to inform the scrutiny select committees about the outcomes achieved by services.

- How do you ensure that this work does not just become the responsibility of members of the scrutiny committee that covers social services?

There is a danger that monitoring information about looked after children could either take over that committee's agenda or – more damagingly – limit the issues covered to those in social services alone.

There are several different approaches you could take to avoid these two dangers:

- setting up a sub-committee of a main scrutiny committee to monitor specific corporate parenting concerns on their behalf
- taking a cross-cutting or themed approach to all scrutiny committees, so that all children and young people's issues are considered together
- in some authorities, this kind of on-going monitoring is shared jointly between the executive and scrutiny functions.

Good practice in Bolton – joint executive & scrutiny monitoring

Bolton have a Children's Policy Development Group, attended by the executive member, but which reports back to both scrutiny and the executive on the monitoring information it receives, including some directly from children and young people.

4.4. Power of health scrutiny

The Health and Social Care Act 2001 gives local authorities in England the power of scrutinising their local health services, supplemented in May 2003 by government guidance on how this should develop. The emphasis in the guidance is on scrutinising health issues rather than specific services provided or commissioned by the health service. It also makes clear that health scrutiny is an important way of seeking to reduce health inequalities and ensuring all agencies are contributing to health improvement.

Looked after children have a range of health needs and problems, including the fact that they often lack people to talk to in confidence about their health, personal development and anxieties. It is particularly important that looked after disabled children receive joined up services from health and social care. The emphasis in the 2002 Government guidance gives a clear remit for scrutiny members to ensure the health needs of looked after children are being met in a holistic fashion by all agencies concerned. One area scrutiny committees could address is the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services available in their area because of the high levels of need and significant new investment by the Government.

Resource File 1

Legal and policy framework governing services for children

The overarching framework of principles is provided by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UN 1989) ratified by the British government in 1991.

See: www.hri.org/docs/CRC89 for full text of the Convention.

The Children Act 1989 provides the basic framework for services for children, and gives local authorities the legal responsibility for children "in care".

The Children Act means that all local councillors, when elected, take on this duty of being "corporate parents" towards such children, the key responsibilities of which are:

- Children in public care must be the *primary* focus for the resources and accountability of the local authority which has accepted a parenting responsibility for them
- Children who have spent a significant time being looked after by the local authority should afterwards be given the kind of support that decent and responsible parents would give to their own children
- Children in the public care and other children in need, including disabled children, should be provided with a fully rounded set of support and care services, in partnership with health and education services particularly. Without such support more children will end up in care.

See: http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/Ukpga_19890041_en_1.htm for text of the Children Act

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 requires the local authority which last looked after a young person to draw up a Pathway Plan, provide them with their own adviser, setting out the services needed to help the young person make the transition to adult life. This includes financial and other support for as long as they continue in further or higher education, recognising that parental support does not usually come to an abrupt end at the age of 16.

See: http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000035.htm for text of the Children (Leaving Care) Act

The Adoption and Children Act 2002

This substantially overhauled adoption law in this country, replacing the 1976 Adoption Act and implementing the proposals from the *Adoption: a new approach* White Paper of 2000. It aligns adoption law with the Children Act to ensure the welfare of the child is paramount and confers new duties on local authorities to provide adoption support services and on the courts to ensure adoption cases progress with appropriate speed.

See: http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/20020038.htm for text of the Adoption and Children Act

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care requires a nominated champion for children in care to promote inter-agency working; Personal Education Plans for Children in Care; a designated teacher in each school to promote the interests of children in care; and, the expectation of a time limit of 20 school days within which children in care who change school must be found an education placement.

The government has produced comprehensive **Guidance on Promoting the Health of Looked After Children**, which places a duty on local authorities, Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities to ensure every child entering care has a health assessment and that a health plan is then drawn up and regularly reviewed for each child in care.

See: http://www.doh.gov.uk/lookedafterchildren/promotinghealth.htm for more information on health and looked after children

Quality Protects (England)

The Quality Protects Programme was launched in September 1998 by the then Secretary of State for Health, Rt Hon Frank Dobson MP, and a special grant of £885 million over five years was allocated to councils with social services responsibilities. Improvement has been the key theme of Quality Protects, based on the premise that high standards of management and practice in the care system are the best safeguards against abuse or harm to vulnerable children.

In addition to improvement and quality, a central part of Quality Protects has been an emphasis on the role of councillors as "corporate parents" to their authority's looked after

children. This was driven by a letter from Frank Dobson to all councillors at the launch of Quality Protects, the key paragraphs of which are reproduced below.

Extract from Secretary of State's letter to all councillors September 1998

"Elected councillors have a crucial role. Only you can carry it out. You can make sure that the interests of the children come first. You bring a fresh look and common sense. As councillors you set the strategic direction of your council's services and determine policy and priorities for your local community within the overall objectives set by government. It is the responsibility of your officers to manage services and resources in order to achieve those policy objectives and to advise your council on the best way forward. Councillors and officers need to have a good dialogue to ensure that councillors clearly understand their role and responsibilities, and that officers understand the expectations of your council.

"As a councillor, you need to makes sure you receive the right information so that you can ask demanding questions about the services and resources for children in your community. You need to know:

- How the overall needs of children in your community, and the likely demand for services have been estimated
- What services are being provided and how much is being spent on them
- How you can judge the quality and effectiveness of services and whether they achieve good outcomes for children. This is essential if you are to discharge your responsibilities to scrutinise and oversee the performance of your local services."

See: http://www.doh.gov.uk/pub/docs/doh/members.pdf for the full text of Frank Dobson's letter to councillors in September 1998

The letter provided a checklist of questions for all councillors to ask about the information the local authority should have on the numbers, types and needs of children in the area and it emphasised that all councillors collectively as the council hold the corporate parenting responsibility and should seek to exercise this in their work as councillors.

See: http://www.doh.gov.uk/qualityprotects/ for more information about Quality Protects

Choice Protects

A new initiative, Choice Protects, focuses councils' work in improving fostering services and offering greater placement choice to looked after children, through better planning and commissioning of services. The initiative is being supported by a £113 million grant over three years.

See: http://www.doh.gov.uk/choiceprotects/index.htm for more information about Choice Protects

Education Protects

Recognising the key role education plays in improving the lives and life chances of all children and those who are disadvantaged in particular, a parallel initiative entitled **Education Protects** has helped to develop improvements in the educational opportunities of looked after children. Schools should ensure they have a designated teacher to advocate for children in care and liaise with other services, and every child or young person in care should have a Personal Education Plan.

See: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/educationprotects for more information about Education Protects

Children First (Wales)

A parallel programme has been in place in Wales since the launch of Children First in 1999. Its objectives were "to transform the management and delivery of social services for children in Wales" with designated funding (amounting to £24.6 million in 2003/4) and reporting arrangements akin to those in England. An identical line to that taken by the Secretary of State for Health in relation to the role of councillors was taken by Alun Michael MP, then Secretary of State for Wales, in his letter to all Welsh local authority members in 1999.

A report on the Outcomes of Children First to the National Assembly's Health and Social Services Committee in March 2003 notes improvements in local authorities' information and planning, and the success of new services, particularly in relation to the health and education of looked after children. However, the current statutory guidance (March 2003) describes the programme as continuing to present "a major challenge to local authorities".

Like its English sister programme, the existing funding and reporting arrangements ends in 2003 for subsequent inclusion in the revenue support grant. The guidance identifies increased investment, clear political commitment and leadership and genuine multi-agency working as central to the programme's developing success in coming years.

See: http://www.childrenfirst.wales.gov.uk/content/about.htm for more information about Children First

Green Paper 2003, Every Child Matters

- The government published a Green Paper in September 2003, which also provided the response to the Laming Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié.

The overall aims of the Green Paper are to:

- Ensure **no child falls through the net** and help every child to achieve their potential
- **Shift** the **balance** towards **prevention** through tackling child poverty, improving early years education and childcare, raising school standards and supporting parents
- **Intervene earlier** before children reach crisis point

The means of achieving these goals are:

- **Clear accountability – putting someone in charge locally and nationally, of coordinating services for children** (Children's Director and Children's Minister)
- **Integrating education, health and social care around the needs of the child rather than the needs of professionals** (Children's Trusts, Children's Centres, Full service extended schools).
- **Raising the priority of child protection across all services – doctors, teachers, police and local authorities** (new statutory duties and local safeguarding children board)
- **Creating a lead inspectorate for children to ensure services are held to account based on how they work together for children** (OFSTED lead inspectorate role)
- **Creating an independent voice for children** (the Children's Commissioner)
- **Raising the attractiveness and status of working with children, and fostering children**
- **Sharing information between services to pick up the warning signs** (Children's Trusts, improved information sharing, common assessment and multi-disciplinary team working)
- **Increasing our focus on supporting families and foster carers**

See: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters for the full text of the Green Paper

Keeping Children Safe: The Government's response to The Victoria Climbie Inquiry Report and joint Chief Inspectors' Report Safeguarding Children

A Better Education for Children in Care

See http://www.social exclusion unit.gov.uk

Resource File 2

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